

The challenges and conflicts of teaching & coaching as dual roles

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Abstract

Individuals hired typically in high school and junior high school health and physical education positions are asked and/or required to coach a sport or more than one sport a year. Many of these individuals are drawn to physical activity and are excited to teach and/or coach. Some see themselves more as teachers and some more as coaches. The conflict to perform both roles can cause conflict, either with alliances to one versus the other, or in finding the time and energy to perform both tasks well.

Keywords: teaching, coaching, dual roles

1. Introduction

Coaching in addition to teaching can make for long and grueling workdays. According to Chu, males may devote 65.3 hours per week to these duties, while females may devote 50.1 hours ^[3]. This can lead to high stress levels for the individual, which in turn may cause role conflict. Role conflict is defined as, "the experience of role stress and role strain due to the conflicting multiple demands of teaching and coaching ^[6]". The role of conflict experienced depends on many factors, including the motivation for both coaching and teaching, and personal experiences. Priorities are different for each individual, which affects how the role conflict is handled. While some individuals are more concerned with winning and athletic performance, some are more concerned with educating youth in health or physical education classes. Evidence indicates that teacher/coaches tend to focus more on the coaching roles ^[2, 9, 13]. External pressures, such as parents, boosters, fans and school administrators also can contribute to the choices made by teacher/coaches. These pressures may force the teacher/coach to favor the coaching role for the glory of the sport. Lackey ^[8] found eighty-one percent of high school principals felt that their coaches were under some degree of pressure to perform up to standards set by some third-party. The priorities of the community play a role in coaching and teaching motivation, as they may work to meet their needs and desires ^[10].

2. Professional Types of Teachers and Coaches

More than forty percent of all full-time secondary educators have some type of coaching responsibility ^[7]. The priorities of these teacher/coaches vary, depending on professional type they fit. Rog ^[11] identifies four types of professionals: coach, coach/teacher, and teacher/coach and Teacher. Each of these types has different career hopes and goals, and is likely to take on the challenges of their roles in a different manner ^[14]. The coach role is one that may have little or no interest in teaching, but uses it as a way of acquiring a coaching position. Almost all time and energy is devoted to coaching, and teaching work is often seen as an intrusion. This type of professional considers coaching to be his/her real job. Although this type

should never be hired to teach, administrators do hire coach types.

The coach/teacher has a stronger interest in coaching, but is able to recognize a responsibility to teaching. Although the coach/teacher tries to balance the two roles, coaching becomes the priority when time, energy, and resources are low. This type is most susceptible to the lure of athletics and external pressure. For the teacher/coach the priority is teaching. Coaching is seen as a secondary task to teaching, and coaching jobs that require too much time are undesirable to this type. The teacher role, which is rare outside of elementary physical education, is strictly devoted to teaching and shows minimal interest in coaching. Many schools do not hire teachers that only teach physical education ^[10]. Coaching is almost always expected.

3. Pathways & Motivations of Coaching

Frequently, pathways into high school coaching begin with teaching. Coaching positions are most often offered in addition to teaching positions, and many times teachers are hired based on their coaching abilities and desire to coach. Because coaching positions are seen as being related to teaching, many coaches are physical education teachers; however many teacher/coaches teach other subjects ^[12]. Eighty five percent of superintendents would give preference in hiring to the teacher with a coaching minor ^[9]. Hiring practices need to be examined in terms of teaching/coaching roles. Although similarities do exist, physical education and athletics share many differences ^[2]. Physical education is characterized by the following: compulsory attendance, little parent interest, uneven student motivation, group teaching, low accountability, little recognition, low community interest, and diffused goals and objectives. The purpose of physical education should be to educate children to be able to lead healthy lives, including exercise and fitness. Athletics are characterized by the following: volunteer attendance, strong parent interest, strong motivation of athletes, individualized teaching, high accountability (win-loss record, statistics), high recognition, high community interest, and focused goals and objectives ^[4]. The purpose of athletics is to excel and display skills and

athletic ability. Because of the differences in the nature of the two, the teaching /coaching approach should be different in each case. Education may be compromised if quality teachers are overlooked in favor of potential coaches.

Youth sport involvement is one factor that influences individuals to become coaches. Individuals that are involved in athletics as children, in high school, and at college, are more likely to pursue coaching opportunities ^[5]. Most coaches become interested in the profession due to close contact, pleasurable experiences and success in youth sports. These individuals have a “love for sport” and a desire to work with young people and give something back to society ^[12]. Students may decide to pursue physical education as a career for the same reasons. Research indicates that 63% of pre-service students prefer the coaching role to the teacher role ^[11]. Teachers and coaches need to realize that although similarities exist, physical education and athletics also have differences.

4. Managing Role Conflict

Due to the common link between physical education and athletics, many educators take on the dual role of teaching and coaching ^[4]. According to Arbogast ^[1], the key to successful management of the dual roles is processing an understanding of these differences. The professional must be able to prioritize and effectively perform both roles. Some institutions have justified the dual roles by redefining the dual responsibilities: 1) Teacher-coaches are able to effectively perform both roles. 2) Teaching is the same as coaching with the only difference being the skill level and motivation of the participants and 3) Those entering teaching and coaching are equally interested in both roles and will devote equal time to both roles ^[14]. Those that cannot meet this definition should not perform dual roles. A quality teacher does not always have the necessary skills and attributes to coach, and not all coaches make good physical educators.

Hiring practices need to be separated, so that the most qualified individuals are found for each role. This will not only benefit the education of the students, but the athletic department as well. The two roles need to be treated separately and one should only perform dual roles if he/she is dually qualified and can handle it without compromising the school or athletic program ^[13]. Unfortunately, qualified coaches are difficult to find, so teachers become the natural choice to fill coaching duties. In most cases, one cannot live on coaching salaries alone, and the schedules of non-teachers do not allow time for coaching. For those who are coerced into dual roles, the challenge is to find ways to make teaching meaningful, to overcome the seductive power of athletics ^[7]. Physical educators should set themselves up to be accountable in the classroom as well. Teacher/coaches must remember that they are hired to be teacher first, and coaching responsibilities should not detract from teaching.

5. Conclusions

Coaching continues to be a career choice for individuals involved in sport. Although individuals may not be aware of the role demands of the dual role of teacher and coach, many professionals are taking on both roles. The expectations from the two roles can cause one to experience role stress, role strain, or role conflict. This may have negative consequences and may affect the Professional's performance and mental state

and lead to early career termination or burnout of one or both roles.

Motivational factors also influence the role balancing of teacher/coaches. Each of the four professional types: coach, coach/teacher, teacher/coach, and teacher handle the demands of the job differently. Priorities and motivations differ for each person, which also can have an effect on role conflict. People decide to coach for many reasons, love of sport, pressure from school administration, and extra money needed. These reasons may determine what type of professional they become and how they deal with the role strain faced by many.

It is also acceptable for individuals to perform both roles, as long as they can properly balance their time and resources. It is also important for these individuals to be aware of the differences between physical education and athletics, and adapt their teaching methods accordingly. Role conflict experienced by teacher/coaches will not only have negative consequences to the individuals, but also to the students and athletes as well.

6. Applications in Sport

Seemingly, Physical Education and coaching have always gone hand in hand, and perhaps always will. As individuals struggle with obtaining positions, and their own desire to succeed in both, various issues arise. Priorities such as interest level, time commitment, compensation and resources affect how successful one can be at juggling both teaching and coaching. Perhaps addressing individual motivating factors can assist in lessening teacher burnout and improving the quality of both coaching and teaching.

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